



Percy Bysshe Shelley
An Exhortation
1820

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An Exhortation

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Camelions feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light camelions do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a-day?
Poets are on this cold earth,
As camelions might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is camelions change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright camelions should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
O, refuse the boon!